

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Summary Report of the Marine Parks Committee

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to inform Members of the major issues discussed at the Marine Parks Committee (MPC) meeting held on 5 July 2024.

2. Citizen Science Programme for Subtidal Habitats in Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park – Final Report

2.1 The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) commissioned the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2022 to carry out a study to launch and implement a citizen science programme focusing on subtidal habitats in Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park (HHWMP) (the Programme) so as to increase the public's scientific knowledge, especially on marine biodiversity and the conservation in marine parks, through active participation in field survey and data collection. The study team presented the design of the Programme, as well as the recruitment and training of team leaders at the MPC meeting held in 2023. At the current meeting, the study team reported on the recruitment of citizen scientists, the findings and highlights of the ecological surveys, and the feedback and recommendations on the Programme drawn from the study.

2.2 Members generally opined that the Programme would facilitate the studies on the biological resources of three taxa groups in HHWMP, namely hard corals, fish and sea slugs, and be effective in strengthening public education. A Member enquired about the availability of technological devices on the market for long-term monitoring, in order to minimise disturbances to the study due to weather conditions. The study team indicated that the application of technology and artificial intelligence in the study might be the way forward. The Programme was implemented on a trial basis, and future studies could be carried out as needed to explore the use of technology for supporting the study. A Member was concerned about the possibility of further expanding the scope of the Programme to other marine parks and covering other varieties of fish/species. The AFCD pointed out that the marine parks were rich in resources, and that upon completion of the trial Programme, the AFCD would analyse the findings of the study in detail, and subject to the availability of resources, assess the feasibility of extending or expanding the Programme and explore the way forward.

3. Proposed Marine Resources Enhancement Measures in Specified Marine Parks

3.1 The AFCD has commissioned a consultancy study since 2023 to devise appropriate marine resources enhancement plans for four specified marine parks (SMPs), namely Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park, Yan Chau Tong Marine Park, Tung Ping Chau Marine Park and Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park. At the meeting, the consultant reported on the ecological profile, environmental profile and marine/fisheries resources profile in respect of each of the SMPs, and reviewed the past marine resources enhancement measures in Hong Kong and overseas to summarise the relevant experiences. The consultant also put forward strategic recommendations for individual SMPs on the two popular marine resources enhancement measures, namely artificial marine resources enhancement devices and marine resources restocking.

3.2 Among the various recommendations, Members were particularly concerned about the arrangement of restocking. They also suggested increasing the quantity of fish to be restocked and stepping up public education on animal releases and restocking. The AFCD stated that the initial restocking events could be organised by the Government. In the long run, it was hoped that restocking exercises could continue to be organised by utilising more non-government resources and discussions on the co-operation arrangements would be conducted with fishermen groups in due course. A monitoring survey would be conducted after science-based restocking. The AFCD would also consolidate its internal resources to conduct a survey on the overall fisheries resources. Regarding illegal fishing, the sea enforcement team of the AFCD was committed to combating illegal fishing activities by employing technology and artificial intelligence, coupled with the intelligence provided by fishermen and collaboration with the Mainland enforcement counterparts. Members were generally of the view that the marine resources enhancement measures proposed by the consultant were conducive to the rehabilitation of the ecosystem and boosting the effectiveness of the protected areas. The AFCD remarked that the study had provided a systematic analysis of the characteristics of the four SMPs and made recommendations on the appropriate enhancement measures. In future, the Government might consider combining resources from different organisations and make reference to such recommendations when formulating projects to enhance marine resources.

4. AOB – Progress on Designation of North Lantau Marine Park

4.1 The AFCD reported that the Government had gazetted the designation of North Lantau Marine Park (NLMP) on 14 June 2024. The relevant designation order was introduced into the Legislative Council for negative vetting on 19 June, and would come into effect on 1 November. NLMP would become the eighth and largest marine park in Hong Kong.

4.2 Members were concerned that different government departments were taking their own measures to enhance marine resources and protect the habitat of Chinese White Dolphins in The Brothers Marine Park, Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park and NLMP, and they suggested consolidating the relevant strategies and the work on monitoring, assessment and public education. The AFCD indicated that it would continue the liaison with relevant Hong Kong SAR government departments and the Mainland authorities such as the Forestry Bureau of Guangdong Province and Pearl River Estuary Chinese White Dolphin National Nature Reserve with a view to enhancing co-operation on various fronts, such as management, publicity and education, data sharing, dolphin monitoring and the formulation of action strategies.

5. Presentation

5.1 This paper is prepared for Members' information.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
September 2024